

## APPENDIX 2 - BENEFIT FRAUD INSPECTORATE RECOMMENDATIONS – PROGRESS TO DATE

| No | Recommendations  | Target Date | Lead Officer                        | Comments   |
|----|--|-------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1  | <p><b>High Priority</b><br/>Stevenage Borough Council actively pursues IT system issues with its IT provider to ensure the Benefits system is developed and improved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow the assessment of benefit for all claim types and in all circumstances</li> <li>• Accurately record all system transactions for reporting purposes</li> <li>• Produce comprehensive, accurate and consistent management reports</li> <li>• Allow system access levels that are determined by need</li> </ul> | 30.11.06    | Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) | <p>Meeting held with software suppliers Anite on the 21.6.06 to review the outstanding issues with Revenues and Benefits system. Programme of work agreed to deliver the required changes by the end of November 2006.</p> <p>The Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) is leading a forum of Section 151 officers representing Councils using the Anite Pericles software. This group will work closely with Anite to shape the future development strategy of the product.</p> |
| 2  | <p>Ensures reliable and properly validated management information is used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform strategic and operational plans</li> <li>• Set targets and monitor performance against them</li> <li>• Report performance against Best Value Performance Indicators to Senior officers, Members and the Department for Work</li> </ul>   | 30.11.06    | Head of Revenues                    | <p>See 1 above. Reliable information from the system will allow the Council to set targets, monitor progress and keep key officers, Members and the DWP informed of progress. At present considerable additional effort is being invested in detailed reporting and manual cleansing of data.</p> <p>The additional resources being applied in this area is enabling the Council to report and monitor current performance.</p>  |

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|----|--|-------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 3  | <p>and Pensions (DWP)</p> <p><b>High Priority</b></p> <p>Introduce a system of management checking, which incorporates a minimum of 4% pre-notification check and from which the results are used to inform service improvements and individual training needs</p>   | 1.9.06      | Benefits Manager                    | Completed   |
| 4  | <p>Take urgent steps to review risks to internal security by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtaining annual declarations of interest from all staff involved in claims administration and developing procedures for dealing with any cases identified</li> <li>• Introducing controls to manage the level of risk introduced by system access levels</li> <li>• Reviewing and strengthening post opening procedures</li> </ul> | 30.6.06     | Benefits Manager                    | Completed   |
|    |  | 30.9.06     | Head of Revenues                    | Develop a framework for controlling system access levels. Soft ware suppliers Anite are working to provide a system solution by the end of October 2006 |
|    |  | 31.8.06     | Benefits Manager                    | Review completed and revised post opening arrangements to be introduced in October 2006   |
| 5  | <p>Introduce transparency to the work of Internal Audit to improve assurance to senior officers and Members by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring Internal Audit is actively involved in the implementation of major projects</li> </ul>   | 31.7.06     | Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) | The Council has introduced a separate Audit Committee from May 2006 and the audit programme has been revised for 2006/07                                |
|    |  | 30.6.06     | Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) | Completed. A memorandum was issued to relevant Service Heads mandating the involvement of Internal Audit in all future projects                         |

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|---|---|------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 6   | <b><u>High Priority</u></b>   | 31.7.06          | Head of Finance                     | Completed   |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing the Internal Audit process to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to the Benefits service based on the level of risk</li> </ul> | 31.05.06         | Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) | Completed   |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing an Audit Committee to monitor the performance, effectiveness and findings of internal audit activity</li> </ul>                    | 31.05.06         | Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) | Completed. All outstanding recommendations and outcomes to be reported to Audit Committee with revised timescales agreed for completion |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing Internal Audit recommendations to agreed timescales</li> </ul>  |                  |                                     |   |
|   | Takes additional steps to prevent fraud and error entering the Benefits system by:  |                  |                                     |   |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring verification check lists are fully completed to provide a full audit trail</li> </ul>   | 30.6.06          | Benefits Manager                    | Completed. Revised instructions issued to staff   |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening procedures to verify residency</li> </ul>  | 30.6.06          | Benefits Manager                    | Completed   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The routine use of ultraviolet lamps when checking documents for authenticity</li> </ul> | 30.6.06   | Benefits Manager | Completed                           |   |

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|----|---|-------------|------------------|---|
| 7  | <p><b><u>Medium Priority</u></b></p> <p>Reviews access to its Benefits service for customers attempting to make contact by telephone</p>  | 31.10.06    | Head of Revenues | Monitor volumes and agree jointly with the Council's Customer Service Centre the best method of handling calls. The Council has established a project group to explore ways of improving access to all Revenues services. |
| 8  | Ensures that changes of circumstances are assessed promptly and within standard   | 30.9.06     | Benefits Manager | Develop procedure for prioritising changes in circumstances. Pending the implementation of an electronic document management system fast tracking arrangements have been introduced to prevent overpayments occurring     |
| 9  | Ensures appropriate cases are referred to the Rent Service within statutory timescales  | 31.3.06     | Benefits Manager | Completed   |
| 10 | Develops a Benefits service Business Continuity Plan and ensures all staff are aware of its contents and what is required of them in the event of serious disruption to the service | 30.9.06     | Head of Revenues | Business Continuity Plan has been submitted for inclusion in the Council wide plan. Will be launched as part of corporate process.  |
| 11 | <p><b><u>Medium Priority</u></b></p> <p>Undertakes analysis to identify why customers fail to provide all the necessary information required to support new claims and changes</p>  | 31.10.06    | Benefits Manager | Review of customer interface to determine why customers are failing to provide the appropriate supporting information   |

